

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 093-896

SP 008 271

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TITLE Inservice Educational Needs of Teachers.  
NOTE 6p.  
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.75 HC-\$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE  
DESCRIPTORS College Credits; Credits; \*Educational Needs;  
\*Individual Needs; Inservice Programs; \*Inservice  
Teacher Education; \*Opinions; Professional Continuing  
Education; Teacher Motivation; \*Teachers

## ABSTRACT

This paper begins by reviewing current research on the merits and failings of various forms of inservice teacher education. Much of the research quoted stresses the need to consult teachers on their opinions of their educational needs. A study is described that assessed the current status and future directions for inservice activities as expressed by Massachusetts home economic teachers. The instrument used in the study was a questionnaire. Results and findings of the study are listed. It is concluded that: (a) much is to be gained by "asking the teacher" concerning the future of inservice activities and (b) the results of the Massachusetts study indicate the need for a greater variety of types and lengths of activities, for measures to increase teacher motivation for continuous professional growth, and for more inservice programs offered for graduate credits. (JA)

## INSERVICE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF TEACHERS

by  
Marian L. Wilson

1 In a changing society the role as well as the competencies demanded of  
2 teachers are constantly changing. This is an indication that four years of  
3 college will not prepare a teacher for a life-time career and relevant, in-  
4 service activities must be available to all teachers. These activities will  
5 become a more vital influence on professional growth if the planners are aware  
6 of where the participants are and take them from there in the direction they  
7 want to go.

8 Rakes (5) is very critical of the millions of dollars that are spent on  
9 national, state, and local workshops, in-service meetings, courses and other  
10 activities, with limited success of these efforts. He recommends a diagnos-  
11 tic program in which the participants determine to some extent what is  
12 included.

13 Many school systems require teachers to obtain additional credits for  
14 salary increment. Graduate level courses should be available to meet the  
15 constantly changing needs of teachers. This added responsibility may tax the  
16 already limited resources of the colleges and universities. Crabtree (2) ad-  
17 vocates that in-service education must be an important constituent of  
18 university teacher education programs; but, before the program can be estab-  
19 lished the expressed needs of teachers must be considered.

20 Lano (4) states that "no one asks a teacher much about anything - and  
21 about professional development, even less." Surveys of needs expressed by  
22 teachers are few and infrequent, and there is danger that teacher education  
23 programs may become insensitive to actual teacher needs.

Finding out what teachers need and want was the first challenge of NEA's Division of Instruction and Professional Development. An in-depth study was conducted to identify teacher problems and the type of assistance that would reduce the problem. (3)

Bohn (1) believes that the current teachers must be the ones to introduce the new concepts and ideas into the schools. These ideas can be introduced to the teachers through in-service education, but first the teacher must be convinced that the change is desirable and will improve his instructional program.

Motivation for participation is a current concern in that teachers who need updating are the most likely to remain complacent. Interest in continuous professional growth would be heightened if state departments of education had periodic assessment of certification with renewals dependent upon effective preparation and performance. (7) Periodic certification evaluations could serve as an incentive for those teachers retiring temporarily from the field to raise a family, to continue to remain professionally active. (6)

These concerns for effective in-service programs to meet expressed needs of teachers prompted a study sponsored by The Home Economics Resource Center at the Framingham State College. This study assessed the current status and future directions for in-service activities as expressed by the Massachusetts home economics teachers.

The objectives of the study were (1) To determine the expressed needs of home economics teachers in relation to in-service education. (2) To determine the most desirable types of in-service activities. (3) To deter-

mine the most desirable subject matter areas to be included in such programs. (4) To gather educational preparation data, teaching experience, and other relevant information from the teachers. (5) To make these findings available to the institutions of higher education and other groups responsible for in-service programs.

A questionnaire was designed to collect the desired information. It was pre-tested and the final form was sent to all 1403 home economics teachers in Massachusetts. A total of 956 (68 percent) returned the questionnaire. Data were collected on their teaching experience, educational background, marital status, professional affiliation, subject area taught, future study plans, topic of interest in in-service programs, most desirable types of in-service activities, and principle influences on course content.

### Results and Findings

Both personal and professional information was collected and analyzed from the 956 respondents, with the major focus on in-service educational needs. A summary of the major findings of the study is as follows:

1. Forty-five percent of the teachers had taught five years or less, while 15 percent taught 20 years or over.
2. Fifty percent were either single or married with no children, with the balance either married, widowed or divorced with children.
3. The educational attainment of 23 percent of the respondents was a Master's Degree or over.



4. Over half (56 percent) had received educational preparation in home economics education, with the balance majoring in a home economics subject area except 7% who received their Bachelor's Degree in a non-home economics area.
5. Thirty-five percent were members of the state and national home economics professional association, while 70 percent had joined the teachers association.
6. Less than four percent were involved in an occupational home economics program.
7. Twenty percent of those not having a Master's Degree are currently working toward it, while thirty percent intend to study for this degree within the next five years.
8. Forty percent of the total respondents were not interested in graduate study with family responsibility, lack of time, and nearing retirement given as the most common reasons for not pursuing further study.
9. Course work was required for salary increment by sixty-five percent of the teachers, and 87 percent had taken some college-level courses within the last five years.
10. Subject areas of nutrition, consumer education and family relations, along with new methods, techniques, instructional media, and dealing with the low ability student were rated as most desirable in-service topics by two-thirds of the respondents.
11. Short summer seminars of one or two weeks or weekday workshops during the school year were the most favored types of in-service activities.

## Conclusions

Considerable input influencing the direction of in-service activities can be gained by "asking the teachers". Teachers responded to a list of 36 possible topics according to their need for information and interest. Those topics of greatest interest could be incorporated into courses offered by the colleges or universities, serve as a focus by the professional association in their meetings and journals, and be used by the state departments of education as workshop topics. The pre-service teacher education program could use these concerns to insure more relevant teacher preparation.

More in-service programs should be offered for graduate credit to meet the needs of those studying or planning to study for a Master's Degree or to meet salary increment requirements. These programs should be conducted off-campus as well as on-campus to provide more accessibility to the teachers.

A greater variety of types and lengths of activities are indicated. Both summer and school year programs are of interest to the teachers. These programs should be planned to meet a wide variation in education levels, undergraduate training, teaching experience and interests.

More motivation is needed to encourage participation and continuous professional growth. Increasing efforts by the state home economics supervisors, the institutions of higher education, and the professional associations could be made to motivate teachers to continue professional improvement through graduate study and by participation in other in-service activities.

The need for state-wide coordination of in-service education programs is of increasing importance and could serve to make the best possible use of limited resources. Follow-up studies and trend analysis should be a continuous part of in-service planning activities and would serve to make these programs relevant to the times and needs of the participants. Responsibility for this rests equally on the colleges and universities, the state departments of education, and the professional associations.

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